

TITLE: Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director Recommendation to the Board of Education

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) approves the recommendation to reappoint Felicia Villalobos to the position of Executive Director. Pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes §302A-801 (f), this appointment is designated for a four-year term beginning July 1, 2026, and concluding June 30, 2030.

The recommendation for reappointment is supported by a consistent record of positive performance evaluations over the current term. As documented in the following New Business Items (NBIs), the Board has rated the Executive Director's performance as follows:

- [NBI 22-98](#) 2022-2023 The Hawaii Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation: **Acceptable**
- [NBI 23-45](#) 2023-2024 The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation: **Commendable**
- [NBI 24-35](#) The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2024-2025: **Commendable**
- [NBI 25-41](#) The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board Executive Director's Evaluation Recommendation for 2025-2026: **Commendable**

In accordance with established protocols, the HTSB Chairperson (or their designated representative) will present this selection to the Board of Education (BOE) for final confirmation during a scheduled public meeting. This leadership transition remains subject to the Board's oversight, which includes mandatory annual performance reviews to ensure continued alignment with the HTSB's strategic goals and statutory obligations.

The Executive Director's annual salary for the new term will be finalized through formal contract negotiations following BOE approval. While the initial salary will be established at the onset of the term on July 1, 2026, the HTSB retains the authority to determine and implement any future salary adjustments based on performance outcomes and budgetary considerations.

Rationale/Background:

Pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) §302A-801(f):

"The Board may employ an executive director for a term of up to four years, who shall be appointed by the Board of Education without regard to chapters 76 and 89; provided that the Board shall submit a nominee to the Board of Education for approval or disapproval; provided further that if the nominee is disapproved, the Board shall submit another nominee to the Board of Education for approval or disapproval.

The Board may terminate the executive director's contract for cause, provided that the

Board shall submit a recommendation for termination to the BOE for approval or disapproval.”

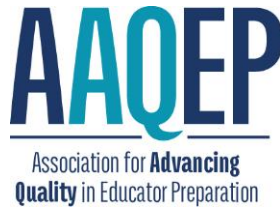
Cost:

The Executive Director’s compensation is appropriated within HTSB’s annual fiscal budget.

Submitted by: Kristi Miyamae

Referred to: Budget, Personal, and Strategic Planning Committee

UNAPPROVED



April 14, 2026

Dear Members of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board and Board of Education,

I am pleased to offer my strongest support for the reappointment of Felicia Villalobos as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). Having had the privilege of working alongside Felicia and observing her leadership, I can confidently attest to her integrity, passion, and steadfast commitment to transparency. She is a principled and diligent leader who consistently follows established rules and processes. At the heart of her work lies a deep dedication to Hawai'i's keiki—she is driven by the belief that every child deserves more, and she works tirelessly to strengthen the state's educator workforce in service of that goal.

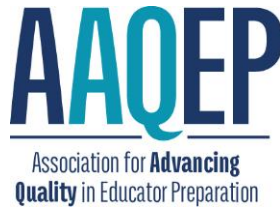
Felicia is an exceptional supporter of collaboration who believes in strong partnerships across agencies, institutions, and communities. She brings together diverse stakeholders—national organizations, state leaders, Hawai'i educator preparation providers, and practitioners—creating space for meaningful dialogue and shared problem-solving. She skillfully identifies and leverages available resources, recognizes and values the expertise in the room, and asks thoughtful, sometimes difficult questions that move conversations forward.

Felicia demonstrates a strong command of Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR), ensuring that the HTSB's work remains fully aligned with these frameworks. She approaches policy with both rigor and practicality, helping the Board navigate complex regulatory requirements while keeping a clear focus on purpose and impact. Her leadership ensures decisions are grounded in statute and rule, yet remain responsive to the needs of the field whenever possible.

She has provided steady leadership in supporting the Board's development, interpretation, and consistent application of policies and procedures. I have rarely seen a board represented as frequently or as well at national events. Felicia brings clarity to complex issues and ensures policies are implemented with fidelity and transparency. Her work reflects a thoughtful balance between maintaining high standards and enabling effective, efficient processes that support educators and programs.

A central strength of Felicia's leadership is her unwavering commitment to upholding high standards for teacher preparation, licensure, and professional practice. She understands the critical role the HTSB plays in ensuring a well-qualified educator workforce and fostering a respectable profession. She has worked diligently to maintain rigorous expectations while supporting continuous improvement across the system.

Felicia has also demonstrated strong leadership in strengthening the teacher pipeline. She has supported the Board by advancing actionable ideas and pathways such as Educators Rising and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program. These efforts reflect a forward-thinking approach to workforce development—expanding access to the profession while preserving



quality. Her work in this area contributes meaningfully to building a sustainable, well-prepared educator workforce for Hawai'i.

Beyond these areas, Felicia brings a thoughtful, strategic perspective to her role. She listens carefully, communicates clearly, and leads with professionalism and purpose. Her ability to connect policy, practice, and people makes her an effective and trusted leader.

In my experience, Felicia Villalobos exemplifies the leadership necessary to guide the HTSB's vital work. I strongly support her reappointment and have every confidence in her continued contributions to the Board and to the educators and students of Hawai'i.

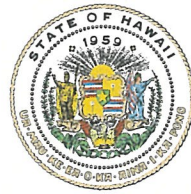
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sungti Hsu", with a stylized, flowing script.

Sungti Hsu

Chief Relationship Officer
Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804**

HENRY J. KAISER HIGH SCHOOL
An International Baccalaureate World School

511 Lunalilo Home Road
Honolulu HI 96825-1705
USA

April 15, 2026

It is a distinct honor to provide this letter of recommendation for Felicia Villalobos. Having served as the Board Chair for the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB), I had the privilege of working closely with Felicia during a pivotal period for educator standards in our state. I have seen firsthand her unwavering commitment to the HTSB mission and her exceptional ability to navigate the complexities of educational leadership.

Felicia is a master of stakeholder engagement. She possesses the rare ability to foster strong partnerships across diverse organizations and communities, often bridging the gap between administrative requirements and the lived experiences of teachers. Her collaborative approach ensured that the Board was not operating in a vacuum but was instead deeply connected to the needs of the educator workforce and the communities they serve.

One of Felicia's greatest strengths is her meticulous adherence to the Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR). She ensures that every action taken by the HTSB is legally sound and aligned with our statutory responsibilities. Her leadership in developing and interpreting board policies has provided a consistent, fair, and transparent framework for licensure, which is essential for maintaining public trust.

Felicia's vision extends beyond mere compliance; she is a champion for the future of the profession. She has been a tireless advocate for high standards in teacher preparation and professional practice, ensuring that every student in Hawai'i has access to a well-qualified educator. Furthermore, she has been instrumental in offering actionable pathways to strengthen the teacher pipeline. Her support for initiatives like Educators Rising and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program demonstrates her forward thinking approach to solving the teacher shortage while maintaining rigorous quality controls.

Felicia Villalobos is an exemplary leader whose impact on the HTSB and the broader educational landscape in Hawai'i cannot be overstated. She leads with integrity, intelligence, and a deep-seated passion for the teaching profession. I recommend her without reservation for any endeavor that requires a visionary leader dedicated to excellence in education.

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Please feel free to contact me if you require further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Branden", followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that extends to the right.

Branden Kawazoe
Former Board Chair, HTSB

14 April 2026

To Whom it May Concern,

I submit this letter in support of Ms. Felicia Villalobos' reappointment for another 4-year term as the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board's Executive Director. Although I have my reservations that my letter of recommendation will be well received, I would like to submit it with the hopes that the current bullying process that is being exhibited to push the Legislature and the Teacher's Union's agenda to simply add unqualified numbers to the Teacher's Union ranks.

Ms. Villalobos has clearly demonstrated her ability to push through difficult situations and putting aside personal opinions and beliefs for the betterment of the process and to ensure that the students' education and well-being are being served first and foremost. Ms. Villalobos diligently serves this position with strict devotion, often sacrificing others' opinions of her to push forth the best possible options for our future generations. Her steadfast loyalty to the thousands of keiki matriculating in our public schools, without input and ability to provide insight, is undying and true. To sacrifice an asset such as Ms. Villalobos for the ill-advised convenience of allowing sub-par, unqualified individuals who will be shaping our children's future would be a HUGE waste of talent and character. Granted, Ms. Villalobos' steadfast loyalty to our children's future may be seen as a challenge for those with less insight and understanding of the gravity of these issues and seen as a roadblock to the rubberstamping of proposals of convenience at the cost of our students' quality of education. Knowing that the Teacher's Union is pushing for an increased membership simply to benefit from more union dues and slanting the perspective of the legislators to help line the union's pockets is truly disgusting and, if passed, something that every individual behind this ridiculous measure should be put under scrutiny and strict audits enforced. I am sure the last thing that the Legislature wants is to be the focal point of huge scandal like the Governors of Minnesota and California currently face. The cronyism will most certainly come to light, should an independent investigation be ordered (which I and many others would whole heartedly support).

Ms. Villalobos is highly versed in the Hawai'i Revised Statutes as well as the Hawai'i Administrative Rules and how it applies to the HTSB's original charge, responsibilities and recommendations. To forego all of this institutional knowledge would negatively impact any forward progress that the HTSB has fought to gain after correcting MANY improprieties. The continued efforts by Ms. Villalobos to correct prior wrongs has been an arduous task, but one of necessity to ensure a solid foundation to forge a proper and solid foundation for future actions to benefit the education being provided to our children, thereby ensuring the future of our beloved State.

Ms. Villalobos's attention to detail and incredible work ethic have not been recognized and although she would defer any credit, has been paramount in trying to uphold a high standard for the teachers who directly affect the outcome of our children's matriculation through our public school system. Ensuring the proper licensure and professional practices are being maintained without compromising for the sake of convenience has truly been a herculean task that Ms. Villalobos has taken on without regard for recognition or spotlight.

Ms. Villalobos does not serve as a mere clearing house for the efforts of her board members. She has effortlessly worked with her board members to nurture and develop strategic ideas and tactfully tried to push for these ideas to come to fruition, only to be met with resistance from those who would not directly (some would infer personally) benefit from undermining these efforts to upkeep and improve the standards that perspective teachers would need to meet in order to bear influence on our children in the classrooms.

Should you require any clarification or explanation behind my support of the re-appointment of Ms. Felicia Villalobos, feel free to contact me directly at bikercarl@gmail.com.

Mahalo in advance for your favorable consideration in these regards.

Carlton S. Ho

Catherine H. Payne
98-715 Iho Place #1404
Aiea, HI 96701
808-223-3146
catherinepaynehawaii@gmail.com

April 15, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to write this letter in support for Felicia Villalobos in her role as Executive Director of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). I served with Ms. Villalobos on the board from the fall of 2017 through the spring of 2022 while I also served as chair of the Hawaii State Board of Education. Previously I was the secondary principal representative for HTSB from 1998-2007. I know how critically important this agency is in assuring that our teachers are highly qualified for their important role with our students.

When I rejoined HTSB in 2017 Ms. Villalobos was an elementary teacher representative and chair of the board. Her leadership skills were evident as she navigated the multiple connections within the Department of Education, the teachers' union, the legislature, our higher education partners, and the wider community. Her commitment to maintaining high standards of teacher quality while exploring different options for licensing led us to expand opportunities for those aspiring to teaching careers.

As HTSB Chair Ms. Villalobos immersed herself in learning the laws, rules and policies that guided our work. We were all impressed by both by her understanding of these often complex directives and by her ability to help us comprehend them. She guided us through proposals for new legislation and helped decision-makers understand long-term impacts. When the position of Executive Director become open, it was clear to the board that she was the best candidate for the challenging job.

My background as a leader and a trainer of leaders gave me a unique lens with which to observe Ms. Villalobos. She had to work with many diverse organizations and individuals and she was able to do so with a consistently respectful manner that reflected grace and understanding. She demonstrated a high level of personal integrity that was reflected in her interactions with her staff, the board members, and the public who came to present or testify at our meetings.

Ms. Villalobos was actively engaged in reimagining and developing initiatives that supported the current teacher workforce. The Code of Ethics is an example of a collaborative project between the teachers, their union leadership, and the Standards Board. She also worked to continue support for teachers elevating their skills through the National Board certification process. She offered ideas to strengthen the applicant pool through preservice programs such as Educators Rising and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program. Her focus was always on the recognition of teaching as a profession, both internally and among our external communities and partners.

Since my retirement from active work with the Board of Education and the DOE I have continued to follow the accomplishments of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board and its executive director. We are fortunate to have Ms. Felicia Villalobos at the helm of this important agency.

Sincerely,



Catherine H. Payne
Retired Educator

April 13th, 2026

Dear Members of the Review Committee,

I am pleased to offer my strongest possible support for Felicia Villalobos in her continued role as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). It has been a privilege to work alongside Felicia in advancing our shared commitment to educator excellence across Hawai'i, and I can state with confidence that her leadership has been both impactful and essential to strengthening the state's educator workforce.

Throughout our collaboration, I have been consistently impressed by Felicia's ability to foster meaningful partnerships across institutions, school systems, and community stakeholders. In my role as Dean at Hawai'i Pacific University, I have worked closely with her on a number of complex and often unique cases involving our education students. In each instance, she has approached these situations with thoughtfulness, responsiveness, and a solutions-oriented mindset, ensuring that students are supported while maintaining the integrity of licensure standards. Her ability to balance flexibility with rigor is a defining strength of her leadership.

Felicia has also been instrumental in supporting HPU in navigating pathways for students from non-traditional or evolving preparation routes, including those from the former Teach Away program. Her guidance has been invaluable in helping these candidates successfully work toward licensure, contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable teacher pipeline in Hawai'i. These efforts reflect not only her deep understanding of policy, but also her commitment to ensuring that qualified, capable individuals are able to enter and remain in the teaching profession.

Equally noteworthy is her unwavering commitment to upholding the Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR). She approaches this responsibility with both rigor and integrity, ensuring that HTSB's actions are consistently aligned with statutory and regulatory expectations while remaining responsive to the evolving needs of educators and institutions. Her ability to navigate complex policy environments with clarity and sound judgment has been a hallmark of her leadership.

In her work supporting the Board, Felicia has demonstrated exceptional skill in the development, interpretation, and implementation of policies and procedures. She ensures that HTSB's work is not only compliant, but also coherent, transparent, and consistently applied. This has strengthened trust across partner institutions and reinforced HTSB's credibility within the broader educational community.

A central hallmark of her tenure has been her focus on maintaining and elevating teacher quality across the state. She understands that licensure is not simply a regulatory function, but a critical mechanism for ensuring that all students in Hawai'i have access to well-prepared, highly effective educators. At the same time, she brings a pragmatic and forward-thinking approach to strengthening teacher pathways, recognizing the importance of developing and sustaining a robust, locally grounded educator workforce.

Beyond these specific contributions, Felicia leads with integrity, professionalism, and a genuine commitment to the communities she serves. She embodies the values of collaboration, responsibility, and care that are essential to educational leadership in Hawai'i. Her ability to align policy, practice, and people makes her an exceptional leader and a vital asset to the state.

I offer my unequivocal and strongest endorsement for Felicia Villalobos' continued leadership as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



Mani Sehgal, PhD
Dean, College of Professional Studies
Director, School of Education
Hawai'i Pacific University



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KALANI HIGH SCHOOL
4680 KALANIANA'OLE HWY
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96821

Dr. Michael P. Ida
Mathematics and Computer Science Teacher/Department Chairperson
Director, Hawai'i National Board Collective

April 14, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great respect and enthusiasm that I write in support of Felicia Villalobos and her continued service as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board. In my capacity as one of the Directors of the Hawai'i National Board Collective, I have had the privilege of working alongside Felicia in efforts to support and uplift National Board Certified Teachers across our state. In that role, I have come to know her as a deeply committed, thoughtful, and highly effective leader whose work has had a meaningful and lasting impact on the profession.

What has struck me most about Felicia is the depth of her engagement. Too often, partnerships between organizations remain superficial, but Felicia approaches collaboration with intentionality and care. She is consistently present, hands-on, and genuinely invested in the work we do. She does not simply lend her name in support of initiatives, but seeks to understand them fully. She asks thoughtful and incisive questions, not for the sake of formality, but out of a sincere desire to ensure that she is well-informed and that her contributions are meaningful and aligned with the broader mission. This intellectual curiosity, paired with her openness to dialogue, makes her an exceptional partner and collaborator.

Felicia's leadership is also marked by a clear and steady commitment to maintaining the integrity and quality of the teaching profession in Hawai'i. Through her work with HTSB, she demonstrates a strong alignment with the policies, standards, and responsibilities entrusted to the Board, while never losing sight of the human dimension. She understands that licensure, certification, and professional standards are more than just procedural requirements, but essential components in building and sustaining a high-quality educator workforce.

Felicia has shown a keen awareness of the importance of developing and sustaining teacher pathways. Her support of National Board Certification and related initiatives reflects a broader vision for strengthening the profession, not only by recognizing accomplished teachers, but by cultivating systems that encourage growth, mentorship, and long-term commitment to teaching.

In our work with the Hawai'i National Board Collective, her support has been both practical and strategic, helping to create opportunities for teachers to grow while also elevating the profession as a whole.

It is in the spirit of ensuring that all teachers are accomplished teachers that I offer my strongest recommendation for Felicia Villalobos' continued service as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board. I am confident that her leadership will continue to strengthen the organization and advance the vital work of supporting educators across our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael P. Ida". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" being the most prominent part.

Michael P. Ida, Ph.D.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



MAKALAPUA ALENCASTRE, Ed.D.
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION
(‘AHA KULA HO‘ĀMANA)

1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1100, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel: (808) 586-3775 Fax: (808) 586-3776

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION: FELICIA VILLALOBOS

On behalf of the Hawai‘i State Public Charter School Commission (Commission) and our chair, Dr. Makalapua Alencastre, I submit this letter of recommendation in strong support for Ms. Felicia Villalobos, the executive director of the Hawai‘i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB).

The Commission considers HTSB a vital state partner and Ms. Villalobos has consistently demonstrated open collaboration, cooperation, and professionalism. Felicia goes above and beyond to support the Commission and charter schools as it pertains to teacher licensing. She provides timely data and clearly communicates any issues so that schools stay in compliance, which ultimately impacts student learning. We have found Ms. Villalobos' leadership to be sharply focused on high quality teaching standards through her commitment to teacher preparation, licensure, professional development and practice in order to build an effective teacher workforce pipeline. In other words, she is not only addressing the issues of today, but is building a system of support that will ensure effective teacher preparation and placement for the future.

Under Felicia's leadership, innovative programs that elevate teacher pathways and development to strengthen teacher recruitment and pipeline development like Educators Rising and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program, are concrete examples that demonstrate her commitment to the position and ability to lead HTSB. Ms. Villalobos also convened a CTE Workgroup and invited the Commission to participate. All of her events and meetings are always collaborative and her team always follows up and through with deliverables, further demonstrating her professionalism and standard of excellence.

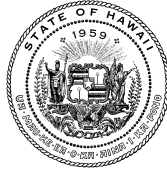
In addition to Ms. Villalobos' obvious commitment to HTSB and teacher licensure, her attention to details, especially regarding policies, Hawai‘i Revised Statutes and Administrative Rules is impressive. Her expertise, knowledge, and experience make Felicia an invaluable asset to her Board, State partners such as the Commission, and the teaching profession as a whole.

The Commission is confident that Ms. Felicia Villalobos will continue to be a key partner as she leads HTSB to maintain a high-quality organization focused on advancing educator excellence in Hawai‘i.

Respectfully,

A blue ink signature of Ed H. Noh, consisting of a stylized 'E' and 'N'.

Ed H. Noh, Ed.D.
Executive Director, Hawai‘i State Public Charter School Commission
ed.noh@spcsc.hawaii.gov
(808) 800-6616



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
PEARL CITY HIGH SCHOOL
2100 HO'OKI'EKI'E STREET
PEARL CITY, HI 96782

April 13, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I am honored to write this letter of recommendation for Felicia Villalobos in her role as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). I have had the privilege of working with Felicia through our shared efforts in planning *Dive Into Education* and her initiatives such as Educators Rising, where her leadership and commitment to strengthening the educator pipeline in Hawai'i have been clearly evident.

HTSB has supported our *Dive Into Education* events from the start, and now going into our third year, their partnership has really meant a lot. In our second year especially, Felicia took a lead role in helping the event run smoothly. She coordinated support for logistics, made sure our VIP guests were taken care of, and brought her team to assist with check-in, emceeing, and leading breakout sessions. Her leadership and willingness to step in and support in so many ways made a huge difference.

Felicia is also very committed to building the teacher pipeline. Through HTSB, she has been instrumental in securing funding for the Educators Rising curriculum over the past two years, which has allowed schools like ours to offer the program without worrying about the cost. HTSB has also provided professional development days for teachers, which has been really helpful in building and strengthening our programs.

I strongly support Felicia Villalobos in her continued leadership. She is someone who shows up, follows through, and genuinely wants to support both educators and students. I really appreciate her partnership and am confident she will continue to make a meaningful impact on education in Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

Tammy Yoon
Pearl City High School
Teaching as a Profession Program of Study Lead



STATE OF HAWAII
Ke'ena Ho'okele Ho'ona'auao Pae Kamali'i o Hawai'i Moku'āina
Executive Office on Early Learning
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

April 15, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I first met Executive Director Villalobos in 2022, shortly after she joined the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) and I began my role with the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). We began working together through our shared involvement in the Ready Keiki initiative.

I am writing to acknowledge and express appreciation for the collaborative partnership and ongoing engagement of Executive Director Villalobos in strengthening Hawai'i's early learning workforce and licensure systems.

Executive Director Villalobos provided helpful context on New Business Item 17-06 (2017), which revised the requirements for adding the Early Childhood Education field to an existing Hawai'i teaching license. This informed EOEL's review of licensure requirements alongside public PreK expansion and alignment with the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) benchmarks. On March 24, 2023, New Business Item 22-78 established the Early Childhood Education Teacher Licensing Workgroup to review licensure criteria across early learning fields.

EOEL identified a gap related to Counseling K–12 licensure. Through coordination between HTSB and Chaminade University, New Business Item 24-14 expanded Chaminade's school counseling license to include preschool.

Although EOEL had not previously participated in the Teacher Education Coordinating Committee advisory meetings, Executive Director Villalobos advocated for our invitation. She recognized EOEL's unique perspective of the early learning workforce, as well as our role in providing professional development, coaching, and mentoring.

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Recruiting and retaining a highly qualified workforce is a shared priority. As HTSB explored apprenticeship approaches, EOEL connected Executive Director Villalobos with the National Council for Professional Recognition and the Early Care and Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS) initiative. These connections provided an opportunity to learn from emerging national models that integrate on-the-job training, coaching, and college coursework.

When a university submitted an application for a new early learning teacher preparation program, Executive Director Villalobos and the HTSB team invited me to participate in the program review process.

In 2025, EOEL was included in the Cooperating/Mentor Teacher Workgroup (New Business Item 24-38), contributing to the development of criteria for selecting mentor teachers within State Approved Teacher Education Programs (SATEPs).

EOEL has been invited to participate in the “Dive into Education” event at Leeward Community College over the past two years. Most recently, EOEL hosted breakout sessions for students interested in early learning careers.

While we have not always agreed on every issue—such as the extension of permits to five years—Executive Director Villalobos has taken the time to understand EOEL’s perspectives, including those related to initial licensure pathways.

Across each of these partnerships, Executive Director Villalobos has demonstrated fair, principled, and dedicated leadership, consistently upholding HTSB’s responsibilities under Hawai‘i Revised Statutes and Administrative Rules.

It has been a pleasure working with Executive Director Villalobos over the past four years. She has been collaborative and engaged in thoughtful dialogue to support Hawai‘i’s early learning workforce.

Sincerely,



Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hale o nā Luna Makaʻāinana

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
415 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

HTSB Board
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, HI 96817

April 15, 2026

Aloha mai kākou,

I am pleased to offer my strong recommendation for Felicia Villalobos in her role as Executive Director of the Hawaiʻi Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). It has been a privilege to work alongside Felicia in advancing a shared commitment to strengthening Hawaiʻi's educator workforce and ensuring that our public education system is grounded in excellence, equity, and accountability.

Felicia brings a rare combination of technical expertise, strategic clarity, and values-driven leadership to her work. At the core of her leadership is a deep understanding that educator quality is a systems issue that requires coherence across policy, preparation, licensure, and ongoing professional practice. She consistently approaches this work with both rigor and a clear sense of public responsibility.

In terms of collaboration, Felicia has demonstrated an exceptional ability to bring together diverse stakeholders—educators, preparation programs, policymakers, and community partners—into meaningful and productive alignment. She understands that the strength of HTSB's work depends on trust, transparency, and sustained engagement. Whether working with the Board, the Department of Education, the University of Hawaiʻi system, or community-based organizations, she fosters relationships that are not only functional, but durable and grounded in shared purpose.

Felicia's leadership is also defined by her strong adherence to Hawaiʻi Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawaiʻi Administrative Rules (HAR). She navigates these frameworks with precision and integrity, ensuring that HTSB's actions are both legally sound and aligned with legislative intent. Importantly, she does not treat compliance as a passive obligation; rather, she actively interprets and applies statutory and regulatory frameworks in ways that strengthen the Board's ability to fulfill its mission.

This is especially evident in her work supporting rules and policy implementation. Felicia has played a critical role in helping the Board develop, interpret, and consistently apply policies that

uphold high standards while remaining responsive to the realities facing educators. She brings a steady, thoughtful approach to policy—one that balances consistency with the need for adaptability in a rapidly changing educational landscape.

A central strength of Felicia's leadership is her unwavering commitment to maintaining teacher quality. She understands that licensure is a core mechanism for protecting students and supporting the profession. Under her leadership, HTSB has continued to uphold rigorous standards for teacher preparation and professional practice, ensuring that Hawai'i's educators are equipped to meet the needs of our students and communities.

At the same time, Felicia recognizes that maintaining high standards must be paired with intentional efforts to strengthen the teacher pipeline. She has been instrumental in supporting the Board's work to expand and diversify pathways into the profession. Initiatives such as Educators Rising and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program reflect a forward-thinking approach to workforce development—one that acknowledges both the structural barriers to entry and the urgent need to grow our own educators here in Hawai'i. Her ability to translate these ideas into actionable strategies has been critical to their progress.

What distinguishes Felicia's leadership, ultimately, is her ability to operate at both the systems level and the human level. She understands policy, but she also understands people—teachers navigating complex pathways, communities seeking stability in their schools, and institutions working to adapt to evolving demands. She leads with a clear sense of purpose, grounded in the belief that strong public institutions are essential to the well-being of our communities.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside Felicia and for the leadership she continues to provide. I offer my strongest support for her continued service and advancement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Amy Perruso". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Amy" and last name "Perruso" clearly legible.

Rep. Amy Perruso
Hawai'i State House of Representatives
District 46



INPEACE

INSTITUTE FOR
NATIVE PACIFIC
EDUCATION
AND CULTURE

April 16, 2026

Aloha mai kākou,

On behalf of The Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE), I am pleased to offer our strong support for the reappointment of Felicia Villalobos as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). Through our partnership, we have worked closely with her in advancing educator development efforts that are responsive to Hawai'i's communities.

Felicia is a collaborative and thoughtful leader who consistently engages community-based organizations and elevates diverse voices in education. Her approach reflects a deep understanding of culturally grounded partnerships in supporting all communities and strengthening pathways into the teaching profession. In her leadership role, Ms. Villalobos has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to strengthening Hawai'i's educator workforce by upholding rigorous licensure standards, improving systems of accountability, and ensuring that every student across our islands has access to highly qualified teachers.

A key example of this is Felicia's engagement with INPEACE's flagship program, Ka Lama Education Academy. Ka Lama develops homegrown educators through a culturally grounded, community-based model, and Felicia has demonstrated strong support for ensuring that such initiatives are aligned with state systems while preserving their cultural integrity. Her involvement has helped strengthen meaningful pathways into teaching community-rooted candidates.

Felicia has also been a strong advocate for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification pathways. Her support has helped expand access to Hawai'i educators seeking National Board Certification, including the establishment and sustainability of cohorts facilitated by a National Board-Certified Teacher (NBCT). These cohorts provide structured guidance, mentoring, and preparation, strengthening teacher effectiveness and professional growth across the state.

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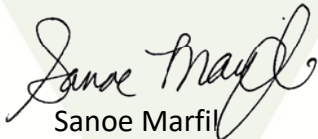
In her role with HTSB, Felicia upholds Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) with consistency and integrity, ensuring transparency and accountability in the Board's work. At the same time, she brings a practical understanding of how policy is implemented in ways that remain accessible and relevant to the communities served. Felicia has contributed to the effective implementation of HTSB policies and procedures, supporting clarity, consistency, and responsiveness to workforce needs. Her ability to bridge policy and practice strengthens collaboration across agencies and programs.

We also value Felicia's support for educator pathway initiatives, including Educators Rising, the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program, and Ka Lama Education Academy. These efforts reflect a shared commitment to building a sustainable, locally grounded educator workforce in Hawai'i. Throughout our partnership, Felicia has demonstrated a consistent commitment to maintaining high standards for teacher quality while also advancing pathways that reflect and serve the communities of Hawai'i.

Based on our experience working together, INPEACE strongly supports Felicia's reappointment. We are confident she will continue to serve with integrity, collaboration, and dedication to Hawai'i's educators and communities.

Please feel free to contact me if additional information is needed, sanoem@inpeace.org

Me ka ha'aha'a,



Sanoe Marfil

Chief Executive Officer

Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture - INPEACE

April 13, 2026

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board

Attn: Board Members

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation in strong support of Felicia Villalobos and her exceptional leadership and service as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). In my previous role as Director of Certification for the Arizona Department of Education and overseeing the state's certification system and Educator Preparation Programs, I developed a deep understanding and respect of the complexity and responsibility inherent in this work. As the current Program Director for iteach Hawai'i, and in my previous role as Director of Certification for the Arizona Department of Education, this experience gives me a clear lens through which to recognize the exceptional effectiveness and dedication Ms. Villalobos consistently demonstrates.

Ms. Villalobos' commitment to collaboration is a clear strength. She builds strong partnerships by engaging educators, preparation programs, policymakers, and community members in meaningful ways. Her ability to bring people together around shared goals has strengthened relationships and supported more effective outcomes across the education community.

She also demonstrates a strong commitment to adhering to Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR), ensuring that HTSB's work remains both compliant and aligned with its intended purpose. She approaches this responsibility with care and professionalism, maintaining the integrity of the Board. In supporting rules and policy implementation, Ms. Villalobos provides steady leadership to the Board in developing, interpreting, and applying policies that advance HTSB's mission. She balances big-picture thinking with practical application, helping ensure consistency and clarity in decision-making.

Maintaining teacher quality remains central to her work. She supports high standards for teacher preparation, licensure, and professional practice, contributing to a well-qualified and effective educator workforce across Hawai'i. To ensure quality educators who have a lasting impact on student learning and success. All of which aligns to the HTSB's Mission and Vision to ensure quality educators who have a lasting impact on student learning and success.

Ms. Villalobos has also contributed to strengthening teacher pathways by offering thoughtful ideas and practical strategies to support the pipeline. Efforts such as Educators Rising and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program reflect her commitment to building and sustaining the educator workforce.

Overall, Ms. Villalobos brings a steady, thoughtful leadership style grounded in integrity and a clear focus on progress. Her contributions have had a meaningful and lasting impact on HTSB and the broader education community.

I offer my highest recommendation for Ms. Villalobos without reservation. She is an outstanding leader whose dedication and expertise continue to make a meaningful difference in advancing educator excellence.

Sincerely,

Michelle Brady

Michelle Brady
Program Director, iteach Hawai'i
michelle.brady@iteach.net

April 13, 2026

Dear Board of Education and Hawaii Teacher Standards Board Members,

I am honored to provide this letter of recommendation for Felicia Villalobos as she seeks to continue as Executive Director of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board. Throughout my two terms of service on the board, I have seen HTSB reach new heights of efficiency and success. This progress is due entirely to Ms. Villalobos' leadership and the countless hours of hard work she invests into the success of our educators and students.

Collaborative Leadership and System Innovation

Ms. Villalobos is a truly collaborative leader. She has bridged the gap between HTSB and various educational institutions, bringing together speakers and experts from across the country to modernize our licensing system. Under her leadership, she spearheaded the transition to an online access portal and a streamlined communication system that respects and values an educator's time.

Beyond convenience, she has prioritized integrity and oversight. She implemented robust fraud detection measures and held higher education institutions strictly accountable to their contractual promises. By building a comprehensive system of checks and balances, she has created a level of accountability that directly benefits the Department of Education.

Ms. Villalobos has been a visionary in addressing Hawaii's teacher shortage through her "Grow Our Own" initiatives. Her accomplishments include:

- Educators Rising: Introducing this program to schools to inspire students to pursue careers in education.
- Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs: Creating clear pathways for educational assistants to transition into licensed teaching roles.
- National Board Certification: Providing vital support for teachers seeking the highest professional standards.

What sets Ms. Villalobos apart is her deep-rooted understanding of the Hawaii education landscape. As a former teacher and board member, she has been instrumental in bringing the voice of the teacher to the forefront of every policy decision. Her research-driven approach and vital "calls to action" have consistently pushed our education system toward excellence.

Regulatory Excellence and Strategic Advocacy

As Executive Director, Ms. Villalobos ensures that all HTSB operations strictly adhere to the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR). She has meticulously aligned these regulations with the board's mission to maintain the highest standards for our state. To support this, she has built an expert team of specialists who skillfully review and prepare the business and agendas that drive the licensing program forward.

Furthermore, her work with state legislators and the Department of Education (DOE) has been instrumental in creating new opportunities and strengthening the foundation of our educational system. She is a vigilant advocate for progress, ensuring that higher education institutions provide the necessary programs to meet the evolving needs of our teachers and students.

Ms. Villalobos is a strong, competent, and resilient leader who consistently fights for the rights and advancement of the Department of Education. Her ability to remain current with educational changes while maintaining rigorous standards makes her an indispensable asset to Hawaii.

It is with the highest level of confidence that I recommend Felicia Villalobos for her continued role as Executive Director of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board.

Sincerely,

Kim Sanders

Retired Principal (Ewa Makai Middle School)

Hawaii Teacher Standard Board Member from 2018 to 2025

April 13, 2026

I am giving my strongest recommendation in support of Executive Director Felicia Villalobos. Having observed her impact through my former work at the Leadership Institute as a State Office Teacher, a National Board Collective Director, and a university educator program evaluator, it is clear that her leadership has stabilized HTSB and elevated the standard of teaching excellence within Hawaii.

Felicia has demonstrated a rare combination of **strategic foresight** and **critical thinking**. She doesn't simply react to the shifting landscape of education; she anticipates it and makes choices to lead in alignment with the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board mission. By analyzing emerging trends and areas that need strengthening, she sees the big picture well in advance. Because of her deep understanding and willingness to take action, she has ensured that the licensing board remains proactive rather than purely administrative.

Her performance is defined by several key pillars:

- **Promoter of Teaching Excellence:** She understands that a license is more than a formality—it is a promise of quality. She has tirelessly advocated for rigorous yet fair standards that ensure the educators who enter our classrooms are adequately prepared to deliver strong learning experiences and outcomes. I repeatedly saw Felicia make much needed contributions to sustain focused awareness and collaboration of National Board Certified Teachers. These teachers are highly respected and are accomplished practitioners who embrace data driven instruction, highly effective reflective practices, and differentiated learning.
- **Exceptional Communication:** Whether Felicia is setting the stage for teacher prep program committees, building stakeholder engagement or navigating complex discussions with state leaders, her communication is characterized by clarity, transparency, and a remarkable ability to widen the view of educational challenges, highlights and goals. Her leadership style empowers those around her, with a culture of accountability and works effectively within our unique Hawaii context.
- **Decisive Leadership:** What I am consistently in awe of is Felicia's advocacy for both the profession and the public interest. She consistently raises important questions and grows the room with her perspective. Beyond her technical competence, it is her unwavering integrity and dedication to the mission that set her apart. She manages the delicate balance of regulatory oversight and professional advocacy with a grace that is rarely seen in such high-pressure roles.

Felicia Villalobos is an indispensable asset and a champion for students and teachers alike. I have full confidence that under her continued guidance, the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board will reach new heights of efficacy and influence. She has made an invaluable difference.

Sincerely,

Kristi Oda, NBCT

April 14, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to strongly support the reappointment of Felicia Villalobos as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) for another four-year term. It has been my privilege to collaborate with HTSB as a Program Reviewer since 2024, during which time I have had the opportunity to closely observe Felicia's leadership, vision, and unwavering commitment to the field of education in Hawai'i.

Felicia is a highly supportive and principled leader who consistently demonstrates a deep commitment to the future of Hawai'i's educators and students. She places a strong emphasis on maintaining the quality of the educator workforce by upholding rigorous standards for teacher preparation programs and licensure. Her dedication ensures that educators entering the profession in Hawai'i are well-prepared, competent, and equipped to meet the diverse needs of learners across the state.

In terms of collaboration, Felicia excels at building and sustaining strong partnerships across institutions and communities. She actively engages stakeholders with professionalism and respect, fostering a shared sense of purpose in advancing HTSB's mission. Her ability to bring together diverse perspectives contributes to thoughtful decision-making and meaningful progress.

Felicia is also highly attentive to ensuring that HTSB's work aligns with Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR). She demonstrates a clear understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks guiding HTSB and ensures that policies and practices are implemented with integrity and consistency. Her leadership in rules and policy implementation reflects both diligence and transparency.

Importantly, Felicia is not afraid to speak out when necessary to uphold the mission and responsibilities of HTSB. She advocates for high standards and remains steadfast in her commitment to educator quality, even in complex or challenging situations. Her courage and clarity of purpose are qualities that strengthen the organization and the broader education system. Additionally, Felicia provides strategic guidance to the HTSB Board in developing pathways to strengthen the teacher pipeline. Her support for initiatives such as Educators Rising and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program reflects her forward-thinking approach to sustaining and expanding Hawai'i's educator workforce.

In all of her work, Felicia demonstrates professionalism, integrity, and a genuine dedication to improving education in Hawai'i. I wholeheartedly recommend her for another term as Executive Director of HTSB and am confident that her continued leadership will further advance the Board's mission and impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this recommendation.

Sincerely,

Akeyo Garcia

Akeyo Garcia, Ph.D.

Hawaii Department of Education, Early Learning State Office Teacher



1181 Kukila Street Honolulu, HI 96818



akeyo.garcia@gmail.com



(808) 284-3985

To Whom It May Concern,

I write this letter of recommendation for Felicia Villalobos with full support of her role as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). It has been a privilege to watch the impact of her leadership hard work driven to strengthen the quality of teachers and education across Hawai'i.

As Executive Director, Felicia models collaborative leadership by connecting with stakeholders from all areas of education and working toward shared goals. She fosters trust and encourages open communication which results in strong, lasting partnerships that support positive growth for teachers and the teaching profession.

Felicia demonstrates clear understanding and application of Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR). She is dedicated to making sure that HTSB is aligned with all requirements and offering transparency on HTSB's efforts to meet them. Her ability to navigate complex policy environments with clarity and integrity is a testament to her expertise and professionalism.

Felicia has shown leadership in the creation, understanding and implementation of HTSB's policies and procedures. She brings insight and understanding to her work from years of experience prior to becoming the executive director as a teacher and member of the elected Board. She makes sure that policies align with requirements and are meaningful yet effective in practice, so that HTSB's vision can positively impact educators across the state of Hawaii.

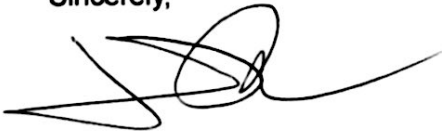
Felicia's is dedicated to maintaining high standards for teacher quality. She plays a key role in ensuring that teacher preparation, licensure, and ongoing professional practice meet high expectations. This contributes to a highly qualified educator workforce, which benefits Hawai'i students and communities.

Felicia is looking into the future by developing and strengthening teacher pathways. She has supported new programs like Educators Rising and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program. These programs help to increase opportunities in the teaching profession and build a more accessible pipeline for educators in the future. Her efforts reflect her commitment to innovation for an even better future for students and the teacher profession.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Felicia is known for her aloha, passion, and dedication to improving education. She approaches her work with purpose and a focus on improving results for educators and students. Her leadership is grounded in understanding of Hawai'i's unique educational landscape.

I offer my humble recommendation for Felicia. She is a caring leader who is dedicated to HTSB and Hawai'i's community of teachers and students.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Kissida
Teacher at Namahana Charter School

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to offer my strong recommendation in support of the reappointment of Felicia Villalobos as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board for an additional four-year term. Through her leadership, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to education, Ms. Villalobos has demonstrated that she is exceptionally well-qualified to continue serving in this role.

Collaboration:

Ms. Villalobos has consistently demonstrated an outstanding ability to build and sustain meaningful partnerships across Hawai'i's education system. She actively engages with the Hawai'i Department of Education, educator preparation programs, and community stakeholders, fostering a collaborative environment grounded in trust and shared purpose. Her leadership in convening stakeholders and encouraging open dialogue has strengthened alignment across organizations and improved collective outcomes for educators and students alike.

Adherence to HRS and HAR:

Ms. Villalobos has shown a strong and consistent commitment to ensuring that all Board actions align with Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR). She has implemented clear processes and safeguards to maintain compliance, providing thoughtful guidance to both the Board and staff. Her attention to legal and regulatory detail has reinforced the integrity and accountability of HTSB's work.

Rules and Policy Implementation:

Under Ms. Villalobos's leadership, HTSB has effectively developed, interpreted, and applied policies and procedures that support its mission. She has guided the Board through complex policy decisions with clarity and consistency, ensuring that processes remain fair, transparent, and aligned with best practices. Her ability to translate policy into action has enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of Board operations.

Maintaining Teacher Quality:

Ms. Villalobos has played a vital role in upholding high standards for teacher preparation, licensure, and professional practice. She has supported initiatives that ensure educators entering Hawai'i's classrooms are well-prepared and equipped to meet the diverse needs of students. Her focus on continuous improvement and accountability has strengthened the overall quality of the educator workforce statewide.

Teacher Pathway Development:

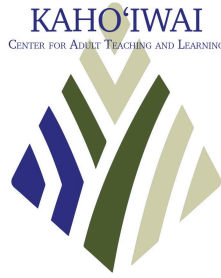
Ms. Villalobos has been instrumental in advancing innovative strategies to strengthen Hawai'i's teacher pipeline. She has provided the Board with thoughtful, forward-looking recommendations and supported initiatives such as Educators Rising and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program. These efforts have expanded access to the profession, created sustainable pathways for aspiring educators, and helped address critical workforce needs.

In summary, Ms. Villalobos's leadership reflects a deep commitment to collaboration, excellence, and innovation in education. Her continued service as Executive Director will be essential in advancing the mission of HTSB and ensuring a strong, effective educator workforce for Hawai'i.

I respectfully urge you to support the reappointment of Ms. Villalobos as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mrs. Leila Cambonga



April 13th 2026

Aloha mai kākou,

I write this letter in strong support of Ms. Villalobos in her role as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). From the very beginning of our work together, she has exemplified the 'ōlelo no'eau, Kūlia i ka nu'u, as her commitment to striving for excellence at the highest levels, not for personal recognition or gain, but for the true betterment of our educators, our students, and ultimately, our state. I first met Ms. Villalobos as a teacher from Kaua'i, and from the first meeting, she came in willing to demonstrate her ability to improve teaching in Hawai'i with intention and humility. She has navigated complex systems, relationships, and responsibilities with grace and purpose. Over time, I have seen her fulfill her kuleana with strength and empathy, improving our educational system and challenging old ideals and processes.

In our collaboration, she values relationships and works well to bring people together. She understands the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders and does so with authenticity and respect, ensuring that multiple perspectives are honored while still moving the work forward and bringing Hawai'i up to a higher standard in teacher education. Her commitment to uphold the Hawai'i Revised Statutes and Hawai'i Administrative Rules is evident in her approach to her work, with integrity and care. She does not treat policy as a checkbox but rather as a responsibility to ensure that decisions are aligned, consistent, and in service of the profession. At the same time, she brings clarity and direction in the implementation of these rules and policies by helping others understand not just the "what" but the "why" behind them.

Ms. Villalobos plays a very important role in supporting the development of teacher pathways, helping to create and sustain opportunities that grow the next generation of educators. She recognizes the importance of how education in Hawai'i differs, and of embracing the values that make Hawai'i "Hawai'i," while also helping the rest of the world recognize that Hawai'i teachers are teachers of quality. She has also helped develop opportunities, such as the Educators Rising and Teacher Apprenticeship Programs, that reflect her forward-thinking approach and commitment to building our educator workforce.

Through her guidance, clarity, and commitment to high standards, she has challenged me (in good ways) to think more critically, lead more intentionally, and remain accountable to the quality of teacher education in Hawai'i. Her selflessness in driving quality at HTSB reflects the kind of leadership that is not only effective but truly admirable.

'O wau me ka ha'aha'a,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Noekeonaona Kirby".

Noekeonaona Kirby

Kaho'iwai, Chief Academic Officer

April 15, 2026

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board
650 Iwilei Road, Suite 268
Honolulu, HI. 96817

Aloha Review Committee,

With pleasure, I submit this letter in strong support for the re-appointment of Felicia Villalobos for another 4-year term as the Executive Director for the Hawai'i Teacher's Standards Board (HTSB). I recently retired from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa where I was the Director of the Graduate Early Childhood Education Programs in the College of Education between 2011 and 2026. During this period early childhood as a licensed field came into professional recognition in the State of Hawai'i and public school PreKs were introduced into the HDOE. College faculty needed to work closely with the HTSB to create license pathways for early childhood educators that were consistent with national standards for the field and to create appropriately rigorous teacher preparation programs in higher education institutions.

As a lead faculty, I interacted with the HTSB in the processes involved to obtain approval of first ECE initial license SATEP in 2011 and three subsequent initial/add-a-field programs (2017, 2020, 2024). Over this time, I have had many interactions with Felicia getting programs approved as well as serving on committees or consulting with the Board. In all of these contexts she has kept the welfare of children in mind and supported higher education faculty in developing programs consistent with this goal. Young children are among the most vulnerable. They can't advocate for themselves, making it essential that teachers licensed in early childhood education can demonstrate the appropriate knowledge for the age group and field of practice. I have appreciated Felicia asking tough, but fair questions when helping faculty to prepare applications in order to ensure that the programs approved produce highly qualified teachers with the knowledge and skill sets appropriate to the youngest learners in the public school system. Her commitment to upholding high standards for teacher quality consistent with national standards and competencies in the field bettered me as a program administrator and faculty responsible for oversight over programs that prepare teachers for our youngest students.

From the system building perspective, I've also observed specific examples of program improvements under Felicia's leadership which positively impact the quality of preparation for early childhood educators. First, applications and on-line resources have been revised to provide more clarity and support. For instance, they more explicitly ask programs to provide information on how they will ensure that students recommended for license will leave the program able to demonstrate all aspects of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes and Hawai'i Administrative Rules and professional competencies specific to the age group and field of practice. Second, under her leadership the HTSB approved NBI 24-18, which specifically adopted Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, which were revised in 2019 to clearly define the breadth and level of knowledge and competencies programs needed to prepare their

graduates to provide at an initial license level. Third, Felicia emphasizes the need for highly effective teachers with degrees in ECE field and practical experience to serve on committees that review program applications and policies involving early childhood license. The ground-up perspectives that master teachers bring to conversations help preparation programs to focus attention on providing clear evidence of the application of knowledge in real world contexts.

Under Felicia's leadership, the HTSB has also focused effort on building the capacity of Hawai'i based teacher preparation programs while also addressing non-local options which fail to demonstrate quality or to contextualize content and field expectations to meet the needs of Hawai'i's unique demographics. The increased expectation of transparency and accountability strengthens and improves the sustainability of Hawai'i based higher education options for students. My experience with early childhood students, particularly those living in rural areas or neighbor islands, is that they are often preyed upon by predatory programs that promise an easy pathway to a degree. After accumulating a great amount of debt obtaining a degree through these options, students apply for advanced degree or certificates at the University of Hawai'i without a comprehensive foundation in fieldwide knowledge and competencies for early childhood educators as defined by the profession. This made it much more difficult for students to be successful in graduate school and perpetuates disparities. I've appreciated Felicia's efforts to maintain quality in preparation pathways while at the same time providing supports to higher education institutions aspiring to create teacher license options.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences working with Director Villalobos. I have appreciated her integrity, knowledge and commitment to students and teachers in Hawai'i.

Please feel welcome to contact me should you require further information.

Me ke aloha,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Robyn S. B. Chun', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robyn S. B. Chun
Retired Director of Graduate ECE Programs
College of Education, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
rchun@hawaii.edu

April 15, 2026

Aloha pumehana,

I am writing to provide strong support for Ms. Felicia Villalobos as the Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB).

As a longtime member of the Hawaiian license workgroup convened by HTSB, I offer my comments for Ms. Villalobos' successful engagement of an extended network of colleagues, including EPPs, HDOE, HSTA, Charter School Commission, etc., to address issues and make recommendations critical to the Papahana Kaiapuni (Hawaiian Language Immersion-Medium education). As a workgroup, we rely on Ms. Villalobos for her expertise, commitment, and passion for her steadfast stance supporting excellence within the teaching profession here in Hawai'i.

In my capacity as the former director of the Kahuawaiola Indigenous Teacher Education Program at UH Hilo and my current role as chair of the Hawai'i Public Charter School Commission, it is evident that Ms. Villalobos shares our commitment and openness to collaborate with the educational community in order to explore and seek solutions to meet the needs and aspirations of Hawai'i's diverse educational workforce. We have worked together to clarify, develop, and implement distinct content teacher preparation standards and initiatives consistent with the intent and administration of Hawaiian licensure fields. Our collective efforts serve to strengthen the teacher pipeline for this critical need shortage area while assuring the quality of preparation and Ms. Villalobos consistently provides strong leadership to continue building and sustaining Hawai'i's educator workforce. Her insights have been critical to creating shared understandings that ensure alignment with Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) in carrying out HTSB's responsibilities.

Although my involvement with HTSB has been limited to Hawaiian education and public charter schools, the impact and contributions made by Ms. Villalobos are extremely valued.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding this support.

Me ka 'oia'i'o,

Makalapua Alencastre

Makalapua Alencastre, EdD
Associate Professor (retired), University of Hawai'i at Hilo
Commissioner, Hawai'i Public Charter School Commission
Email: kaawa@hawaii.edu

April 13, 2026

To Whom it May Concern;

I want to take a moment to speak up on behalf of Executive Director Villalobos. I don't write letters like this lightly, but in this case, it feels important to put into words what so many of us in the education community appreciate. She is exactly the kind of leader HTSB needs at the helm.

One of the things I appreciate most about Executive Director Villalobos is that she does not treat the Hawai'i Revised Statutes or the Hawai'i Administrative Rules as just paperwork to get through. She genuinely understands why those frameworks exist - to protect students, support educators, and keep the public's trust. She is a leader who walks board members through complex statutory questions, flags when a rule hasn't kept up with the times, and pushes to fix things through the right channels. There's a real sense of accountability there that I find reassuring.

Good policy only works if it's implemented well, and that's where Executive Director Villalobos really shines. Under her leadership, HTSB has gotten clearer and more consistent in how it handles everything from teacher prep program approvals to licensure applications to disciplinary reviews. Teachers and candidates actually understand what's being asked of them, which wasn't always the case. That kind of clarity takes a lot of behind-the-scenes work, and it reflects a leader who cares about people's experience with the system, not just the system itself.

With teacher shortages putting pressure on just about every licensing decision, it would be easy to start cutting corners. Executive Director Villalobos hasn't done that. She consistently advocated for standards that mean something; standards that give families confidence that the person standing in front of their child is ready to be there. At the same time, this leader isn't rigid about it. She understands the pressures schools are facing and looks for ways to maintain quality without creating unnecessary barriers. That balance is genuinely difficult to strike, and I've been impressed by how thoughtfully it's been handled.

What really excites me about the Executive Director's leadership is the forward-thinking work around growing Hawai'i's educator workforce. Initiatives like Educators Rising, which gets high school students thinking seriously about teaching as a career, and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program, which lets paraprofessionals earn their way into the classroom, are exactly the kind of creative, practical solutions our state needs. This leader doesn't just manage the status quo; she comes to the board with real ideas and real

pathways for making the teacher pipeline stronger and more diverse. That kind of strategic thinking is rare and valuable.

Beyond all the specifics, what I want to convey is this, Executive Director Villalobos is someone who genuinely cares about getting this right for students, for teachers, and for our communities across Hawai'i. She brings both the expertise and the heart that a role like this demands. I've seen her handle hard conversations, tough decisions, and competing pressures with a steadiness and integrity that I deeply respect.

I'd encourage the Board to affirm this leader's continued service without hesitation.

With aloha,

Daren Anzai

Teacher and parent of two public school students

April 13, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

Since 2014, I have worked closely with the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB), developing sustained professional relationships with the Executive Director, Board Chair and HTSB staff centered on issues of educator ethics and professional responsibility. During this time, I had the privilege of collaborating directly with Felicia Villalobos in her roles as Board Chair and later as Executive Director, where she championed educator ethics and provided steady leadership in advancing standards designed to ensure that every student in Hawai'i has access to well-qualified, licensed, effective, and ethical educators.

During her tenure, Felicia and her staff strengthened the integration of professional ethics across Hawai'i's education system by engaging policymakers and stakeholders through presentations, workshops, and strategic collaboration with organizations including the Hawai'i State Teachers Association, Hawai'i State Board of Education, Hawai'i Department of Education, Teacher Education Coordinating Council, Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools, Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission, and the Hawai'i Education Association.

Ms. Villalobos ensured the sustainability of this work by supporting the development of ethics-focused programming across all state-approved educator preparation programs as they integrated the Model Code of Ethics for Educators (MCEE) into their coursework. Rather than treating the MCEE as a compliance requirement, she emphasized meaningful implementation by providing myriad robust professional learning opportunities for educator preparation program faculty, fostering deeper understanding and authentic application.

In partnership with HSTA, she helped embed professional ethics into Institute Days over multiple years, while also supporting the development of a widely utilized ethics course within HSTA's professional learning offerings. Her team further advanced this work by creating educator resources and establishing teacher ethics task forces to foster deeper, practitioner-driven engagement.

In the professional ethics space—a field that has too often been overlooked or misunderstood—HTSB has adopted a deliberate, collaborative approach that prioritizes stakeholder understanding and professional development. Felicia Villalobos has remained steadfast in her commitment to sustaining and expanding this work. Through her leadership as both Board President and Executive Director, Hawai'i has emerged as a model for best practice in advancing professional ethics in education.

It is without hesitation that I recommend Felicia Villalobos for her continued role as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Troy R. Hutchings".

Troy Hutchings, Ed.D.

Senior Policy Advisor

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC)

April 15, 2025

To Whom it May Concern,

It is with great enthusiasm that I recommend Felicia Villalobos for another 4-year term as the Executive Director of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board (HTSB). I have had the privilege of working closely with Felicia since 2018 in my role as a teacher educator at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) and in my current role as a School Renewal Specialist (SRS) in the Hawaii Department of Education.

I have witnessed Felicia's commitment to expand and sustain an effective educator workforce. As a mentor teacher in the UHM Elementary Education Program, Felicia successfully guided teacher candidates to become effective classroom teachers and educational leaders. Her former student teachers now serve as mentor teachers and report that Felicia inspired them to continue growing their professional practice and become an active participant in teacher development.

As Executive Director for HTSB, Felicia's commitment to the teacher pipeline continues and the scope of her impact has widened. Felicia's collaborative spirit and knowledge of Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) and Hawai'i Administrative Rules (HAR) has helped me to understand the complexity of teacher licensure. In turn, I have been able to help school administrators and new teachers to remove barriers to licensure and put them on a path to success. Felicia is always available to meet with our district support team and/or new teachers to help our complex area grow a well-qualified and effective teaching staff in all our schools.

Under Felicia Villalobos's leadership, HTSB has maintained high standards for teacher preparation, licensure and professional practice. As a 30-year veteran in public education in Hawaii, I see the impact her leadership has had on teacher quality in our classrooms. I strongly believe Felicia should continue in her role as Executive Director of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Ronnie Tiffany-Kinder".

Dr. Ronnie Tiffany-Kinder
School Renewal Specialist
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Office of the President

April 16, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter in support of Felicia Villalobos, Executive Director of the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board. I have known and worked with Felicia for several years in her role as executive director of the HTSB and also previously while she was a licensing specialist with the organization.

Felicia is an excellent collaborator who consistently fosters meaningful partnerships and engages stakeholders across the educator preparation landscape. Her thoughtful approach ensures that multiple perspectives are heard and aligned toward excellence in educator preparation.

Felicia is deeply committed to upholding the Hawaii Revised Statutes and Administrative Rules, demonstrating a strong understanding of the complex political and administrative nature in navigating the regulatory frameworks that govern how teachers and administrators are prepared. She makes decisions based within these frameworks and for what is best for Hawaii's K-12 students.

While Felicia serves the HTSB she also is involved in teacher preparation at the national level. She meets regularly with her colleagues from other states within the CAEP partnership community. We have also asked her to serve on sub-committees' studying issues that impact all states, most recently on our multi-state committee that is examining how providers that offer programs in a number of states can be held accountable.

I know Felicia holds a deep sense of purpose in her work, committed to serving educators and K-12 students throughout Hawaii. She leads with professionalism and a collaborative sense of mission to ensure all students can meet their greatest potential.

I offer you this letter of support for Felicia Villalobos and am confident that she will continue to make meaningful and lasting contributions to educator preparation. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris A. Koch". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Christopher Koch
President